

# EXHIBIT C

**BANKOLE THOMPSON | Opinion** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

■ FOR SUBSCRIBERS

# Bankole: Democrats cater to unions at expense of Black issues

**Bankole Thompson**

Published 8:00 p.m. ET March 19, 2023

Labor is massively reaping its investment in the Democratic Party right now, evidenced by the fast-track move to implement policies that are not just friendly to unions, but make the Michigan Legislature look like a union shop.

The Michigan Education Association is at the forefront of ensuring that the Legislature and the administration of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer deliver for labor in ways perhaps never before seen.

But the biggest investor in the Democratic Party has always been Black people, who are carted in election after election to vote overwhelmingly for the party of the big tent, even when the party on many occasions takes the Black vote for granted.

As Whitmer and House Speaker Joe Tate dance out after moonwalk to the tune of the big union party taking place in the Legislature, there doesn't seem to be any serious proposals to lift urban communities from the economic doldrums. Maybe Black people will have to wait until the unions are taken care of, and then the crumbs left on the table will be given out to urban cities.

A case in point is the debt of the school district of Benton Harbor, the state's smallest majority Black city, which is reported to be around \$12.3 million, as well as those of other cities. The Legislature has not brought up for a debate the need to give the district a clean slate. Democratic lawmakers are pretending the issue doesn't exist because they are too busy right now making sure labor is happy.

In fact, the MEA was among the first White liberal labor groups to shamefully endorse Whitmer's plan during her first term to shut down the only high school in Benton Harbor,

until mass public outcry of Blacks across the state forced the governor to stand down. I don't recall any significant labor group in Michigan at the time intervening to ask Whitmer to stop a move that would have virtually shut down the economically impoverished city.

The action of the MEA at the time raised an important question: Would the group have endorsed a plan by Whitmer to close the only high school in a predominantly White community?

When Benton Harbor's Black community needed the influential unions to stand with them, they were not around. That is why the current high-stakes lobbying by labor in Lansing needs to be put under the microscope.

The MEA, instead of seizing the opportunity of a Democratic Legislature to increase its standing as a union powerhouse, should be leading the effort to address the issues dealing with Michigan's urban core, including the Benton Harbor school crisis where it failed to step up.

Tate, the first Black speaker of the House should know better and bring up the Benton Harbor issue as well as other cities like Detroit and Flint. But he appears to be hopelessly flailing around with no real sense of direction for urban Michigan.

What good is it to have a Legislature with a Black speaker who seems to be putting more effort in satisfying unions than bringing attention to issues affecting Black Michigan? A rising tide doesn't lift all boats, and Tate would have to demonstrate whether he has a real backbone or is simply a happy stooge for labor and other interests.

Tate should convene a public town hall in Benton Harbor and do the same for other urban communities, and codify some of those matters into policy and bring them to the floor of the House for a vote.

Whitmer and Democrats were not elected to serve steak to the powerful labor bosses. Without Black people, Democrats would have no leg to stand on. They owe it to residents of Black Michigan to step up.

Twitter: @BankoleDetNews

bankole@bankolethompson.com

Catch "Redline with Bankole Thompson," which broadcasts at 11 a.m. weekdays on 910AM and "Sunday Nation," on Sundays at 1 p.m. on MyTV38 WADL-Detroit.

